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SUBJECT: Niger: Symposium on Pres. Obama, "The Audacity of Hope,"  
and the Nobel Peace Prize

¶1. Summary: The Charge d'Affaires (CDA) and Public Affairs Section (PAS) Cultural Affairs Specialist participated in a discussion on the merits of President Obama's Nobel Peace Prize at an Abdou Moumouni University-sponsored symposium on October 16. The influential academic presenters, one a former IVLP participant, expressed their views that the international groundswell for peace and tolerance initiated by President Obama's speeches and books justify his award. The audience was comprised of around 150 students and professors. Attendees appreciated the participation of the CDA and his presentation of copies of President Obama's book "The Audacity of Hope" in French to the club. End summary.

¶2. The Abdou Moumouni University's Department of Philosophy invited the CDA and Cultural Affairs Specialist to participate in its monthly discussion club "Cafe Philo" on October 16. The theme of the evening was "The Exceptional Nobel Prize: The Audacity of Hope of Barack Obama." Three university professors presented their views on the Nobel Peace Prize to an audience of approximately 150 university students and professors.

¶3. The first speaker, professor of literature and noted novelist Amadou Saibou Adamou, focused on the innovative vision of world peace, tolerance, and progress described in President Obama's book "The Audacity of Hope." Dr. Adamou Saibou also shared his experiences with the International Visitor Leadership Program on Democratic Governance and Civil Society. He also expressed his gratitude at being able to go to the United States for this program in September 2008 because he was able to experience the atmosphere of the presidential campaign and how then-Senator Obama's message of hope and peace resonated with vast segments of the U.S. population. He added that Pres. Obama's message is now resonating throughout the world, and concluded by saying that the new international momentum for peace and tolerance initiated by Pres. Obama unquestionably justifies the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize. Dr. Adamou Saibou recently moderated a PAS-sponsored round table and Iftaar on the theme of Muslim life in the United States during Ramadan. He also previously spoke at a PAS event on "The Audacity of Hope."

¶4. The second speaker, Dr. Hamidou Talibi, professor of philosophy and Secretary General of the University Teachers' Trade Union, focused on the speeches President Obama gave in Cairo and Accra. Dr. Talibi demonstrated how the President's remarks were inspiring expressions of his strong desire for global peace and progress through interfaith dialogue and tolerance (Cairo) and in good governance as an essential condition for economic growth and non-violent conflict resolution (Accra). For this reason, Dr. Talibi also concluded that President Obama was a well-deserving recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.

¶5. The moderator of the discussions, Dr. Halidou Yacouba, Head of the Department of Philosophy, underscored the need for all nations to work together to promote peace and tolerance. This view, widely shared by the audience, was also supported by the CDA, who observed that the Nobel Peace Prize was an affirmation of Pres. Obama's views

on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and reflected a commitment to multilateral approaches to world issues. He also noted that previous Nobel Peace Prizes had also been future-oriented - such as those bestowed upon Kofi Annan and Kim Dae Jung. The CDA also underscored the significance of the two visits to the African continent by Pres. Obama and the recent visit by Secretary Clinton to seven African nations within the first six months following Pres. Obama's inauguration, demonstrating the Administration's concern for Africa. Finally, he noted that Pres. Obama's December acceptance speech would be very informative regarding his vision. The CDA also presented four copies of "The Audacity of Hope" in French to the grateful "Cafe Philo" club.

ALLEN